

## **Media Release**

### **September 24, 2008**

#### **New Zealand agriculture leaps into the future**

New Zealand's agricultural industry has taken a fast forward with the official opening of the country's first robotic commercial dairy farm today.

On Stradbrook Farm in Mid Canterbury, the cows milk themselves any time of the day or night; the strip grazing fences use solar power instead of human power and robotic gates open and shut alone, driven by the needs of the individual cow standing before them.

Even the effluent system turns itself on and off, sorting fibre from liquid. The 5am/5pm guaranteed milking times are gone and cows are treated as individuals, no longer just a herd.

Owned and operated by the Carr Agricultural Group's company AgriLivestock Ltd, Stradbrook Dairy Farm is the only one of its kind in New Zealand and the world. The 80ha dairy conversion near Mayfield not only showcases innovative dairy farming solutions but is also operating commercially as a fully-functioning dairy farm.

Sister company Winslow Ltd is the agent and New Zealand's first Lely Dairy Centre, is using Stradbrook to showcase the cutting edge technology products. Winslow managing director Craig Carr said Stradbrook will be milking 280 cows this year and working towards developing a split calving model to maximize the use of the robots all year round.

Innovations on the farm include:

- Adapting the robotic milking technology to a pasture-based system;
- The prototype solar powered strip grazer that frees farmers from having to continually move fences, and gives cows a more consistent feed pattern and fresh pasture;
- Grazeway gates that open and close automatically and direct the cow to different parts of the farm depending on what each cow needs and the pasture rotation.
- Automatic Luna cow brushes to comfort and massage the cow
- An effluent system designed by Plucks Engineering that reduces the environmental impact of dairying's most challenging by-product.

Based on the success of robotic milking overseas started by Lely more than 15 years ago, Winslow purchased four Lely Astronaut A3 milking robots in July 2007 after first touring five farms overseas where they were in use.

"After seeing their benefits, we had decided to use the robots in our company's own dairy conversion. We had already had success with Lely's automatic calf feeders so we were confident the robots were the next logical step," Mr Carr said.

Then came the opportunity to become Lely's first New Zealand Lely Dairy Centre, which this opening marks, to act as agent for the products.

Lely New Zealand managing director Peter Vis said the Astronaut robotic milkers were kinder to cows than traditional milking as it served their needs rather than the farmer's time schedule. The robots' sensors also picked up any health issues a lot more quickly than some dairy staff.

Mr Carr said this technology provides New Zealand dairy farmers with another choice.

"Decisions to use this technology will centre around labour, animal health production and the farmer's own aspirations and objectives."

A sophisticated information system collects data about the cow's health and nutrition during milking and when the cow makes its way around the farm, with chip readers scanning a chip in the cows' collars to identify each animal's needs.

In setting up the farm Winslow has worked closely with DairyNZ (formerly Dexcel) which has used a different brand of milking robots on its research farm in Hamilton.

"The robots are proven technology in other parts of the world. Now they have been adapted for grass-based grazing system in countries such as New Zealand and Australia," Mr Carr said.

"Contrary to what the word 'robotics' might make you think, it's not a 'hands off animals' approach. It simply frees up the farmer to choose how to spend his or her time and also reduces the effects of the industry-wide problem of staff shortages."

Once all the cows have calved and are trained in the system the farm will be open to the public for tours from November.

Approximately 40 out of town guests will be touring the farm today and another 200 or so from around New Zealand will attend the official opening and launch of the Lely Dairy Centre by Agricultural Minister Jim Anderton and Lely Holding chief executive Alexander Lely tonight at the Ashburton Hotel.

Mr Carr said both innovating and bringing innovation to NZ had been the Carr Group's strategy over the past 30 years.

"Our core business is to provide 'productivity, profit and peace of mind' to farmers. It is my job to ensure that Winslow continues to be at the forefront of bringing innovation to New Zealand so our customers have solutions to face the ongoing challenges they face on a day to day basis."

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#### **Company profile of Winslow Ltd/Carr Agricultural Group**

*Since purchasing Winslow Feeds feed mill in 2000, the Carr Agricultural Group has re-engineered the small mill and grown the company to become a leading developer of innovative farm feed and service solutions.*

*Winslow Ltd has a ruminant stock feed division, a seed division, a baling and transport division, a bio-systems division and its new farm technology systems division. The Carr Agricultural Group has had a long history in servicing the farming sector started by Greg and Glenys Carr in the late 1970's as baling contractors and farmers. Winslow Ltd was recently named a finalist in the NBR Bayer Innovators Awards for agricultural/environmental innovation. See [www.winslowltd.co.nz](http://www.winslowltd.co.nz) for more information.*

#### **Company profile of the Lely Group**

*Lely is the uncontested market leader in sales and servicing of automated milking systems and holds a strong position in the grassland machinery business. The company is active in well over 40 countries worldwide and employs more than 675 people. In the dairy business, the company pursues a vigorous policy of enhanced international market penetration. This policy is carried out by appointing importers in new countries. In addition, for robotic milking systems, Lely is in the process of implementing the Lely Center concept, a carefully thought-out distribution formula that is unique in the agricultural world. See [www.lely.com](http://www.lely.com) for further information.*

**For additional information, please contact Winslow's PR consultant Fleur Robinson on (0274) 661 777**